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CIA targets Kaunda

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Months of speculation that the CIA had tried to overthrow Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda this June were reinforced last week when a Zambian Foreign Ministry official went on trial for treason in a closed courtroom.

The accused official, Webster Kayi Lumbwe, was arrested last June at the same time two U.S. Embassy officials were expelled from the country and another four Americans were banned from returning to the country. The expelled officials, John Finney and Michael O'Brien, were accused of "activities inimical to the security of the state," and were linked with a CIA examination of "the possibility of an alternative leadership in the country."

Since his arrest, Lumbwe has reportedly admitted that he was recruited by the CIA. According to an article in the Oct. 18 London Observer, Lumbwe's trial has been closed at the request of the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, "apparently to save the CIA from embarrassment."

The Observer report indicates that U.S. dissatisfaction with Kaunda may stem from his decision to buy armaments from the Soviet Union. Kaunda's successful 1979 approach to the Soviets for arms came after many years of refusal from the U.S. and other Western governments to sell Zambia planes and antiaircraft defenses that would match bordering South Africa's offensive weapons.